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ABSTRACT

This case study reviews the conversion of a State Teachers College that became a State College and ultimately was converted to a Liberal Arts institution. Changes are discussed according to administrative personnel, faculty, administrator role, curriculum, policy and procedures, institutional organization, and educational models. (MJM)

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ON CONVERTING A TEACHERS COLLEGE

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ON CONVERTING A TEACHERS COLLEGE

Unlike Abraham Flexner's remark to the effect that no priesthood can reform itself, occasionally the incentive is given that faculty are willing, with leadership, to change their ways and direction. Such as introduction invites a case study of one "State Teachers College" that became a "State College" (but never lost the "Teacher" orientation) and then, in effect, was "converted" to a Liberal Arts institution over the longer haul.

The setting is a rural campus of some 2,500 students that lies far from a major city. In years of practice it has become ingrown with its own graduates and teachers brought in from the public school systems. Higher Education is virtually unrepresented, both administratively--where administrators have come up through the ranks with little conceptual understanding of modern administrative procedures--and professionally with few doctorates in the "content" areas and with "professors" somewhat apathetic and intellectually unstimulating. The institutional head--the President--while amiable and warm, is a political appointment coming from a position as Superintendent of Schools and totally without experience in Higher Education. The Board of Trustees are plain, honest, local folks that want the best for the institution yet have no real concept of Higher Education in these latter days and tend to rubberstamp what may be proposed in one manner or another.

The institution had a long and tranquil history of autocratic governing prior to the incumbent president with the faculty playing

virtually no part in forming policy for the immediate or long hauls that every academic community must settle. In such a situation a faculty does not easily assume governing prerogatives--it must be educated to the ways of Higher Education in the 20th century.

The conversion really begins with one man--a Chairman--who, although at the institution for close to a decade and turned out excellent teachers in his professional area, longed for a strong Liberal Arts orientation such as that of his undergraduate years in the midwest (he was one of the few that had come in from the "outside"). Fortuitously, the President invited this chairman to become Dean for Academic Affairs. While this individual was well-received by the faculty in his post he was without background and experience in the "Administration" of Higher Education. However, interest, wisdom and foresight impelled him to seek a specialist-consultant in Higher Education in the area of Liberal Arts. The original consultant, a retired Vice-President of a major university, after a visit suggested a younger Liberal Arts Dean of experience for further consultation. The outcome of a number of monthly visits over the academic year by the Consultant was that he agreed to become Dean of a newly created Division of Liberal Arts and Sciences on that campus. It might be said that he may have felt as perhaps Dean Monroe of Harvard felt when he went on his mission of good will to Miles College in Alabama with every intent in mind to build the college. The trials, tribulations, joys (?) and certainly the extreme challenge of administrative leadership in such a case formed the magnet to attract a man of experience, and, in essence, formed the backbone for a case study in "converting" a college in these latter days.

Needless to say Mr. New Dean judged with "feeling," stemming from long professional experience, that the "climate" was right for change and the time was at hand to move such a project along.

The new Dean of Liberal Arts came aboard with a few things working for him, but unfortunately, a very large number working against him. His background, beyond teaching, was over a decade as an Assistant Dean in a Liberal Arts college of a large university of national reputation. His age bracket in the early forties worked pretty much for him.

Older, larger universities have established traditions and are geared to patterns hammered out by "strong" faculties, all of which were lacking at State College. In addition, twenty-six faculty members had resigned in a huff some three years previous when the new President arrived and the institution was still picking up the pieces. Mr. New Dean called and wrote to several of the former staff who had resigned--including a Dean and Departmental Chairman. They were firmly vocal, yet interestingly enough, generally loyal in view and feeling of their former institution. The insight and information was most valuable to the incoming experienced neophyte. In addition, while the rubble had generally been cleared away over the interim three years, the new Dean now felt the time was ripe to build the institution in the Liberal Arts image.

How does one administratively begin to revamp an institution that has had nothing but teacher education in its background for over a century? There was no lack of intrigue, particularly when the faculty grapevine had it out that here was a "hatchet man" coming in for the Administration. But where does one begin? The books on administrative

theory deeply lined the Dean's bookshelves yet no two institutions or situations are identical and therefore administrative creativity was readily beckoned forward. To do or not to do???

The steps taken by Mr. New Dean fell into a pattern by design. It seemed to the Consultant turned Dean that a number of psychological steps were in order and had to be taken prior to substantive measures. During the year of monthly consultations, beyond gaining insight and information concerning the institution as well as suggesting timely interim procedures for the College, the Consultant made it a point to meet Chairmen in particular as well as faculty. He had to sell himself as a leader of faculty before he could peddle his wares of knowledge and procedures in Higher Education. Concurrently, and fortunately, some forty-one new faculty positions were authorized for the institution during this consulting year with twenty-nine going to the "substantitive" or "content" areas of what was to be Liberal Arts. The balance largely went to building the Library and Library Science staff with only a half-dozen to staffing Education as replacements. The new twenty-nine faculty members designated for Liberal Arts were by and large younger, more aggressive and holding a much larger percentage of doctoral degrees than the incumbent staff. The new Liberal Arts faculty had backgrounds from Maine to Oregon, with many points between, thereby adding fresh breath and life to the institution. The Dean saw this as a wedge working for him in shifting the balance within the institution toward ultimate faculty governance. Interviews indicated these were men of the "new breed" that were going to add some yeast and ferment to the faculty.

In light of the psychological steps envisioned by the new Dean and in keeping with the fact that the Administration wanted him to come to the institution very badly, plans were submitted by the Dean for a large panelled, draped, carpeted, nicely furnished office with adjoining conference room and a secretarial office and waiting room. In addition, a complete wall of built-in bookshelves backed up the Dean partially as psychological window dressing to help the intellectual climate, yet who responded to comments concerning his library with the fact that the other half was at home in his study--which it was! If anything, the institution lacked "class" and sophistication. Whatever measures, large or small, taken toward a remedy for this "ruralitis" would pay off in the longer run.

What does one do procedurally in order to effect rather radical change in an educational institution? Traditionally, institutions of Higher Education are conservative in nature and change slowly. This is both healthy in that institutional matters are hammered out prior to instituting them, yet administratively frustrating in getting things into gear. However, experienced administrators have learned to live with the latter--time being on their side. There is the old adage in working with faculty that administrators plant the seed one year, water and nourish it the second year, and perhaps in the third year it may begin to bear fruit in that the original ideas begin to ripen in the minds of the faculty. State College could not wait that long nor was there any history that the faculty could or would be willing to accept responsibility thrust upon them. A democratic administrator coming into a somewhat autocratic institution is torn idealogically, yet in instituting

new measures a new Dean in an autocratic institution can have a real thrust in revamping toward excellence by virtue of this very fact.

Mr. New Dean chose a middle road of inviting faculty participation and elected committees, yet instituting change and plugging in higher watted procedures where needed. When a college is single-purpose, informal procedures can prevail and work reasonably well, but as an institution shifts to multi-dimensional capacities then procedures must become more formalized. In an institution without background and understanding of what Higher Education is all about an experienced, optimistic administrator can view this as a compelling challenge that comes about rarely, yet fully realizing the tremendous cost in energy, time, resourcefullness and often frustration that a century of stratified measures can form causing selected surgery to become eminent.

Mr. New Dean, out of necessity, took excursions into many fields from Alumni Relations to tactful presidential advising yet reserving the full thrust of his energies for his inherited child--Liberal Arts. One citation, as an example, was the fact that State College had twenty-two committees--all presidentially appointed. Mr. Dean advised radical surgery in greatly reducing the number of committees and not having them appointed, but generally elective from the faculty. Committee work is the disease of small colleges with a seeming inverse relationship of numbers to size of the institution. Essential committees that were formerly all-college; e.g., Curriculum Committee, were to be pulled out and instituted directly under the aegis of Liberal Arts on an elective basis.

Without former machinery or means of instituting committees within Liberal Arts, choices were obviously available. One could appoint, or allow election, or both. In a self-governing, settled, traditional institution only election is a really viable alternative, yet State College was certainly not in this category. If time warranted, the faculty could decide procedures but this would set hope of revamping the institution back a considerable pace. (Fortunately, the Dean came aboard 1 July and had two months to get settled.) The tentative decision was made by the Dean to invite, by mailed secret ballot, elective members from the incumbent faculty to represent the Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences on the Curriculum Committee. Ballots for each division were mailed to each faculty member in that area, excluding new faculty members. Four names were to be checked on the ballot in rank order one to four. Three from each division formed the committee with the fourth as an alternate for the future, if needed. This gave a balanced committee of nine. The first year (only) the Dean chaired the committee.

During the course of the first semester the Curriculum Committee met bi-weekly for approximately two hours. The Dean set the agenda to be covered. A faculty member was elected as secretary, who recorded the official minutes and reported the proceedings of the Committee to the Faculty at the monthly Faculty Meeting.

Primary attention was given by the Curriculum Committee to a flexible General Education program (vs. the entrenched rigid and inflexible program), to pre-professional programs of Pre-Med, Pre-Dent, Pre-Law and Pre-Veterinary Medicine, to courses, programs, and curricular

relationships between Divisions on campus were among agenda items of particular importance.

A second committee, the Faculty Executive Committee was formed in order that the Dean could have effective and influential help and, more hopefully, support in the formulation of policies and procedures for the new area of Liberal Arts. How does--or should--an effective administrator form such a powerful committee where far-reaching policies are to be formulated? Again the committee could be appointed by the Dean, be purely elective, or elective and appointive. Mr. New Dean chose the third alternative by free, mailed secret ballot across the entire faculty in Liberal Arts. In essence, the faculty elected a panel of fifteen colleagues from which the Dean was to select seven to nine members for the Faculty Executive Committee. The Dean was to chair the Committee the first year (only) with future chairmen coming from the committee at large.

With a faith born of long experience, the Dean knew faculty would elect their most astute colleagues and this feeling was vindicated with the best of what was available. The Dean could work well with a reasonably strong group who might differ in opinion and judgment but who viewed Liberal Arts as an entity rather than through the eyes of their disciplines and departments.

Business items on the agenda consisted of policy matters of organizational and procedural rules of the Faculty to matters of faculty welfare. As with the Curriculum Committee, the Executive Committee met bi-weekly for approximately two hours. The Committee elected a secretary

who recorded the minutes and reported to the Faculty at each monthly Faculty Meeting.

It may be said that Mr. New Dean felt the curriculum belonged to the Faculty and, in a sense, with his experience and position was advisory to that group, while he felt the Executive Committee, on the other hand, was advisory to him but fully based upon a concept of "shared authority." The Executive Committee was his "sounding board" as well as a potential spring of reflective faculty thinking on matters of concern to an embryonic area of Liberal Arts at State College.

While there are a multiplicity of systems in organizing colleges, it is recognized each college possesses individual differences, and, therefore, the basis of organization must be in keeping with a particular institution's aims or any reorganization will be a stormy one with perhaps some foundering on the shoals of time.

In keeping with the Consultant's proposal to the Administration that the institution consider a Lower-Upper Division arrangement at State College, Mr. New Dean upon coming aboard embarked--through the Faculty--on instituting such an arrangement. At the same time, a flexible Lower-Division arrangement of General Education was proposed to replace a rigid system that lock-stepped every student into identical patterns of education. This eventually entailed renumbering courses within the entire institution as well as revamping procedures for accepting majors as well as a multitude of accompanying changes and redefining of goals. Concurrently, new departments, new majors, new programs, new faculty and new priorities were being established for Liberal Arts.

By now it is apparent Mr. New Dean's responsibilities were well-beyond building Liberal Arts. Part of his administration concerned Liberal Arts (in a settled institution it would have been "All") and part concerned the entire institution since with a redefining of Lower-Upper Division all entering students were to begin through Liberal Arts and a "General Education". At the end of two years students would "select" their majors and departments would "accept" them. This is not at all unusual for Liberal Arts, yet was "foreign" to teacher education at this institution since more authoritarian and lock-step methods arrived at during the preceeding century were not easily cut asunder.

While the Dean would personally have chosen the route of democratic faculty participation from the beginning, with the thought of a two or three year haul to arrive at the concept of revamping the College, he was most anxious to cut that time down as much as possible. There was also some pressure to "get moving" from the Administration and without a history of any governing or decision-making on the part of the Faculty the delay could have lingered. Also, the Commission of Higher Education in the capital, with a comparatively large number of state college teacher education oriented institutions, was interested in a possible prototype that balanced Education and Liberal Arts.

As a leader filling a vacuum, Mr. New Dean devised a number of representative "models" in General Education ranging from choice of courses by students within the three traditional Liberal Arts divisions to choices within groupings yet allowing some traditional areas to be omitted if desired. This range of the spectrum was presented to all faculty with time to reflect and digest, yet ultimately coming to

review within departmental meetings. The Dean's calendar was always clear to visit departmental meeting upon invitation and explain choices, alternatives and possibilities for the future.

Since eighteen departments were involved between Liberal Arts (9) and Teacher Education (9) the Dean reasoned for the most flexible curriculum that could be devised. This was felt absolutely necessary since no radical and complete break toward Lower-Upper Division could be undertaken without alienating much of Teacher Education. And it was logical that under a Lower-Upper Division system that some "professional" courses (barring teacher certification courses) had to be undertaken during the first two years to prepare for the major--e.g., Clothing Construction and Foods and Nutrition for Home Economics. This could horify a Liberal Arts "purist" but Mr. New Dean saw this as a chance for students to "try on" a major prior to commitment and for the faculties within various disciplines to measure the appitudes of their potential majors prior to accepting them. The latter factor was considered most critical since both the National Council on Teacher Education and Middle States belabored the fact that no selection of future teachers was taking place. Previously, students enrolled immediately in Teacher Education and either flunked out or graduated even though they had no ability or destiny as a teacher. Teacher Education had no other choices (some State Colleges saw Liberal Arts as a possible dumping grounds--???) so acceptance or rejection of potential teachers was a paramount stepping stone in the whole endeavor and concept of a Lower-Upper Division arrangement.

Departments of Art, Music, Home Economics and so forth that were professionally oriented had to be accommodated at the Lower Division and, therefore, the most flexible curriculum seemed consistent and probably politically most acceptable. It came to pass that the test winds blew true from the professional areas and also from most Liberal Arts departments. A few, in Liberal Arts, however, questioned the possibility of a foreign language, or philosophy, etc. being something less than an absolute flat requirement for graduation. Experience dictated that with a faculty of some two hundred not everyone would be completely satisfied, yet to have the majority suggest and the minority accept the program allowed the institution to surmount an initial major hurdle.

The flexible curriculum finally devised and accepted required only English and Speech as required courses in the Lower Division. Students were allowed to choose courses from four of five "groups" during the first year and "continue" with three of five during the second year. Four courses were left open as electives during the first and second year--one each of four semesters or two each semester during the second year. At this point, pre-professional courses but not "Teacher Education" courses (by Education rule but was later relaxed) could be undertaken as "electives." This allowed a large choice and several electives for students and ultimately a maximum of twelve hours or four courses in pre-professional courses. Art and Music still found this difficult yet with adjustments could live with the pattern.

The suggested numbering system was exemplified by its simplicity of 100-200-300-400 numbered courses. Basically, 100 and 200 courses

fell in the Lower Division and 300 and 400 courses in the Upper Division. Courses ending in zero were to be offered each semester, those ending in one in the fall only, those ending in two in the spring only and courses having zero as a middle number were designed for non-majors.

Students were not to be "locked out" of either lower or upper division (i.e., Juniors might carry Sophomore courses or Sophomores carry Junior courses, etc.), with numbering serving as a general guideline to programming. Also, this was not far removed from the incumbent numbering system which was 100-400 but with a different rationale--i.e., 200 courses were required for majors and 300 courses were electives so in a large number of instances renumbering was not necessary. This was particularly true of first year courses.

With the advent of time, the process will be reviewed for effectiveness and possible change. Yet as a "case study" in making things happen administratively, it is clearly but one of hundreds of "Teachers' Colleges" being "converted" across these United States.